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**UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER AND POWER
THE HONORABLE KEN CALVERT, CHAIRMAN**

H.R. 2301, AUTHORIZING A NEW BRIDGE AT FOLSOM DAM

TESTIMONY OF MAYOR JEFFREY STARKY, CITY OF FOLSOM

April 10, 2002

MR. CHAIRMAN and distinguished members of the Committee, my name is Jeffrey Starsky and I am the Mayor of the City of Folsom, California. I appreciate the opportunity to speak today regarding H.R. 2301, a bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to construct a bridge on Federal land west of and adjacent to Folsom Dam in California.

I wish to begin by thanking you and the members of the Subcommittee on Water and Power for holding this hearing this afternoon. The citizens of the City of Folsom, Sacramento County, El Dorado County, and Placer County need your assistance in helping us adjust to new risks made clear by the terrorist acts of September 11th. This hearing today is a critical step in the life of H.R. 2301, and demonstrates your concern and commitment to ensuring the physical safety and economic security of our city, our region, and the State of California.

Also, on behalf of the City of Folsom, I wish to thank Congressman John Doolittle. Congressman Doolittle has served in Congress with distinction and honor for six terms. We value deeply his hard work, dedication, and commitment to his constituents in Folsom and throughout the entire Fourth Congressional District. Although Folsom falls within a different congressional district beginning next year, our City will continue to value his friendship and his counsel, and we will always consider him a great friend and citizen of Folsom.

At issue is the security of one of the most important Bureau of Reclamation facilities in the nation. The purpose of H.R. 2301 is to *ensure the security of the dam*.

The Flood Control Act of 1944 authorized the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to build a dam on the lower American River. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers completed construction on Folsom Dam in 1956. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation now owns and operates the dam. The reservoir holds just under one million acre feet of water when filled to operational capacity. The dam's power plant has three penstocks delivering 6900 cubic feet per second to turbines producing approximately 10% of the power used in Sacramento each year.

The passage of H.R. 2301 is urgently needed to ensure the security of Folsom Dam and Folsom Reservoir. The new bridge is essential for the physical safety and economic stability of our City and the entire Sacramento metropolitan region. By removing automobile traffic from Folsom Dam, we will prevent the possibility of a catastrophic failure and flood caused by a terrorist act. Mr. Chairman, the City of Folsom strongly supports this legislation and urges you and your colleagues to act expeditiously on H.R. 2301 to make certain the bill is passed and signed into law as soon as possible.

As the Committee is aware, Folsom Dam is a key subject in the ongoing debate regarding Northern California flood control, water storage, and power production. For many years the subject of the debate focused on averting a disaster resulting from events in nature – rain and snow. The focus was on anticipating and controlling large flows of water through the American River and Sacramento River watersheds. And the debate revolved around the type and location of physical barriers – dams and levees – and how best to operate the existing and new systems to manage waterflow safely. The debate also focused on the environmental impacts of decisions regarding those dams, levees, and waterflows.

The physical security of the dam from terrorist attack lurked around the edges of the debate. We should point out that the federal government and others recognized the security risks posed by traffic on Folsom Dam Road, but the matter never seemed urgent until September 11th changed America's way of thinking about security within the United States. In one morning, the issue of traffic atop the dam was transformed into a distinct and critical issue of national significance.

The new bridge at Folsom probably would never have been the subject of its own congressional hearing without the tragedy of September 11th. It is likely the project would have continued to play a minor role in the flood control debate. I believe this is an important point to remember – the need for the new bridge transcends flood control now. And I believe the introduction of H.R. 2301 confirms this point.

While it is certain that Sacramento's flood control debate will continue, I believe it is important to clarify that H.R. 2301 is not a part of that debate even if it implicates flood control. For example, we recognize there are plans and ongoing work to make the dam function better and more reliably as a flood control facility. Congress recently passed legislation providing for modifications to the existing facility to allow earlier water

evacuation to provide a more even waterflow downstream and more storage capacity at the reservoir when it

is most needed. H.R. 2301 will undoubtedly make it easier for these dam modifications to occur. And if Congress decides to raise the Folsom Dam, having a new bridge will facilitate new construction.

But H.R. 2301 cannot be viewed as part of the flood control debate. H.R. 2301 addresses a grave national security risk. The bill should be passed now – it cannot wait for flood control actions. A major breach caused by a terrorist act would result in a titanic flood – *hundreds of thousands of lives* would be at immediate risk, as would the capitol of the *fifth largest economy in the world*. But we are not talking about controlling acts of nature anymore. We are talking about terrorism, about people who have demonstrated the capability and the mindset to cause devastation previously unimagined.

We also recognize that the new bridge would provide other extremely important and direct benefits to our region. For years our City and our region have attempted to address traffic congestion and air pollution. In fact, Folsom recently completed a new bridge across the American River at a total project cost of \$75 million. This new bridge, which was built without federal funds, dramatically improved automobile circulation in our city and regionally. It would be disingenuous for me to downplay our interest in securing construction of the new bridge to help improve our regional traffic and air quality problems. There are other positive outcomes of going forward with the new bridge that are unrelated to security and are also critically important to our City and our region. A new four-lane bridge at Folsom Dam is an indispensable component of the six-county Sacramento Region's Metropolitan Transportation Plan, the area's federally-mandated regional transportation plan for the next twenty years. The new bridge authorized by H.R. 2301 will provide great benefits beyond security. However, just as with flood control, H.R. 2301 cannot be viewed as a congestion mitigation bill.

It is vitally important to get traffic off the dam as quickly as possible. That is the reason we are all here today. National security requires this action. However, we must also ensure that our goal is achieved in a responsible manner. We must work together to ensure that local and regional economic stability is maintained and traffic flow is managed as best as possible while the new bridge is under construction. Specifically, we cannot remove traffic from the dam until the new bridge is in place.

Prior to September 11th, approximately 17,000 vehicles a day crossed the dam. Following events in New York City, recognition of the security risks associated with unlimited access to the dam has resulted in overnight closures of the road and restrictions on use of the road by trucks and larger vehicles. The City supports these controls, but we also have to accept the fact that this road serves as a major regional traffic connector providing access between jobs and housing in three different counties. Some of the larger industrial and commercial enterprises that benefit from this connection include Intel, Hewlett-Packard, Blue Cross and a number of other major employment centers.

The people using the dam road are traveling to and from work and school. They are conducting business and going shopping. They are enjoying the Folsom Lake Recreation Area, one of the most popular state recreational facilities in the nation with over one and a half million visitors annually. While the overriding concern is one of security, it is also clear that closing Folsom Dam Road without a replacement would be devastating to the local and regional economy.

We learned the impact of closure several years ago when repair work required lengthy Folsom Dam Road closures. Several businesses were forced to close and others were deeply hurt economically. Traffic was

horrible, police, fire, and medical response times increased, and the situation aggravated an already dire air quality situation locally and regionally. In fact, Congress recognized the cost of limited closures and authorized up to \$100,000 in reimbursement to the City of Folsom for its costs.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of having the new bridge in place prior to the closure of Folsom Dam Road. We must move forward to get traffic off the bridge as expeditiously as possible, but we must also recognize the economic, traffic circulation, and air quality needs and realities in our region. It is important to note that these three matters are also points of national significance and federal involvement. We can put controls in place to minimize risks to dam security while maintaining access in the interim. I should point out again that overnight closures and restrictions on larger vehicles using the dam road are already in place. It is a difficult balance to strike and one that carries risks, but we must recognize that our economic security and our national security are absolutely intertwined.

The Committee should be aware of the remarkable growth of communities adjacent to Folsom Lake over the past decade. The City of Folsom's population grew from 15,000 to our current 56,000 in a few short years. Eastern Sacramento County, the City of Roseville and southern portions of Placer County, and El Dorado County can also report exponential growth levels.

Earlier in my testimony I outlined flood control related modifications authorized by Congress. There is another point related to government efficiency to be made in favor of going forward with the new bridge as presented in H.R. 2301. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers previously recommended the construction of a temporary bridge to handle redirected traffic while the dam is modified. While the Corps' interest in minimizing the impact of closure is well-placed, it does not make fiscal sense to put \$20 million into a temporary structure when that amount covers almost one third the cost of a permanent, full-service structure. Congressman Doolittle's legislation recognizes the importance of spending our limited federal resources prudently as well as the value of doing something right the first time around. Simple math demonstrates the fiscally responsible approach of foregoing the temporary fix and applying those funds to a permanent, four-lane replacement bridge.

We would like the Subcommittee to know that we have endeavored to meet with other local interests regarding H.R. 2301. Through those efforts, we feel we have covered enough bases to feel comfortable in fully supporting Congressman Doolittle's legislation. We met with the Bureau of Reclamation, our other regional congressional representatives, and our representatives in the Senate. We have talked with other local and regional governments as well as state officials. While we believe there is consensus that H.R. 2301 is the best approach to achieve our goals, several questions were raised fairly consistently during our review. I believe those questions have been addressed in my earlier remarks, but I believe it is worthwhile to call them out separately to ensure the Subcommittee is aware of those questions.

First, some have asked whether the Bureau of Reclamation is the appropriate federal agency to build the bridge. We direct the Subcommittee to a recent letter to the *Sacramento Bee* from Bureau Commissioner John Keys, wherein he wrote, in part:

...the reference to the Bureau of Reclamation not having bridge building capabilities is simply not correct. Reclamation has designed and built many large bridges throughout the West. The beautiful arch bridge that spans the depths of Glen Canyon in Arizona is one example... Reclamation designed

and built the Foresthill Bridge that spans the American River at Auburn...The property where the new bridge would be located is Reclamation land, and Reclamation is quite capable of building the bridge we'll design. Rep. John Doolittle is quite right in authorizing Reclamation to build this much-needed bridge.

This project replaces a federal facility owned and operated by the Bureau of Reclamation. The Bureau has the capability to design and build the new bridge. The Commissioner is in support of the new bridge. We believe this question has been addressed.

Second, we looked at whether the new bridge should be designed and constructed with two or four lanes. Applying the same government efficiency logic to this question, it is clear that the bridge should be a full-service, four-lane bridge. It would be extraordinarily wasteful to build a two-lane bridge when we know that two-lanes were wholly inadequate years ago. Congressman Doolittle's legislation properly requires that the bridge be designed and constructed with appropriate sizing and linkages to support present *and future* traffic flow requirements for the City of Folsom. We believe this is the correct tack. I should also note that the City of Folsom and its regional partners have undertaken significant infrastructure investment, often without federal participation as in the case of the recently opened bridge I mentioned some moments ago. We believe this question has also been addressed.

Finally, we looked at whether this legislation would have any prejudicial effect on the flood control debate. We believe not. In fact, the new bridge would assist in already authorized flood control efforts without unduly aiding or damaging the positions of major players in the flood control debate. The legislation accomplishes as efficiently as

possible the primary goal of securing the facility, provides additional benefits, and does so without biasing the flood control debate or outcome. We believe this question has been answered.

Mr. Chairman, in closing I would once again like to thank you and your colleagues for holding this hearing today. We understand that your committee is extraordinarily busy, and the fact that this hearing has occurred underscores both your commitment to ensuring the safety and security of Americans as well as the clearly established need for the passage of H.R. 2301. We also again wish to thank Congressman Doolittle for all his work on this legislation and on behalf of the City of Folsom over the past decade.

The City of Folsom urges the Subcommittee on Water and Power to report favorably on H.R. 2301 as soon as possible. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today, and this concludes my formal statement. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Again, thank you.